

## DOE Zero Energy Ready Home

### Zero Energy Ready Home Newsletter: December 2016

#### ***2016 Leading Builder Round Table Report***

In September, the DOE Zero Energy Ready Home program hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Leading Builder Round Table Meeting prior to the EEBA Conference and Expo in Dallas, TX. Winners of the 2016 Housing Innovation Awards gathered for a half-day meeting to share lessons learned in constructing and selling Zero Energy Ready Homes, key challenges moving forward, and provide feedback to program staff on what DOE can do to improve the program.

This annual meeting plays a major role in identifying and shaping the future efforts of the Zero Energy Ready Home program to best support our builder partners and further expand the market for Zero Energy Ready Homes. At the 2015 Leading Builder Round Table Meeting, much of the conversation surrounded the need for additional resources to help with marketing and communication. As a result, 2016 saw the launch of the Tour of Zero and accompanying Consumer Video.

Below are some of the major takeaways from the 2016 meeting. You can read the [full report here](#).

#### **Sales and Marketing**

A major takeaway from this year's meeting was that sales and marketing presents a much bigger challenge to Zero Energy Ready Home builders than technical barriers and construction issues. In other words, we have gotten to the point where building a Zero Energy Ready Home is not difficult. The hard part is to find ways to communicate the benefits to consumers. Competing with existing homes and other new builds, partners find it difficult to communicate the true value and benefits of their high performance homes to potential customers. One area where builders did find success in reaching consumers was via social media, which the majority of builders indicated they were using to promote their Zero Energy Ready Homes and grow their brand.

#### **Education and Outreach**

The group agreed that educating a variety of different stakeholder groups was necessary in helping to continue to increase the market share of Zero Energy Ready Homes. Consumer education was high on this list, highlighting the need for a strong consumer video. Additionally, many builders indicated the need for training for sub-contractors, to better understand the program specs, and



realtors, to be able to communicate the benefits of these high-performance homes.

## **Technology**

On this topic, several builders mentioned the integration of smart homes and home automation packages that could also include smart monitoring systems. The advancements in smart home technology and the capabilities they have monitoring and reducing energy use with an interconnected home is a valuable package builders can offer. Additionally, while the majority of builders are still using stick-frame construction, several builders indicated that more time and investment should be made into understanding advanced wall systems such as SIPs and ICFs. Properly ventilating tight homes is also an issue for many builders, including the need for supplemental dehumidification.

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